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CityLife

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I confess to being an incurable name dropper in the retelling of anecdotes. Last week provided a wealth of high level names to drop for this week's column.

On Thursday, I was delivering a limp punch line for a presidential joke when I met up with Chip Carter and his young child on the steps of the White House. I watched in amusement later that afternoon as one of my fellow editors from Panax tried unsuccessfully to steal an official CIA coffee cup and saucer during an informal discussion with CIA-director Stansfield Turner at the Langley headquarters.

ON FRIDAY, my wife excavated half of Virginia Senator William Scott's garden at his request. The Senator, a resident of Fairfax and a neighbor, invited my wife to help herself to his ample garden flowers.

I topped off the week by spilling a half can of Fresca on my new tie during a Pentagon briefing with the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General David C. Jones.

The source of this high level hijinks was a three day seminar sponsored by Panax Newspapers (the parent company of The Globe). The seminar focused on national security and national defense. The line-up of speakers provided a comprehensive overview of where this country stands in the battle of nerves being waged with the Soviets over nuclear missiles and strategic defenses.

THE OPINIONS expressed from the dozen experts who spoke on the status of America's defenses ranged from utter despair to proudful boasts. Some claimed that should a nuclear war breakout between the U.S.S.R.

and the U.S., the Soviets could kill 140 million Americans and destroy 60 percent of our industry. If we retaliated immediately, some experts claim, the United States could destroy at best 15 million Russians and 35 percent of their industry.

In other words, the Soviets could bomb the United States back to the year 1935. We can bomb the Soviets only back to their 1965 standard of living.

Opinions on America's strength varied. General Jones of the Joint Chiefs claimed America's defenses are equal to in quantity and superior in quality to the Russians. Retired U.S. Army Lt. General Daniel Graham, who is co-chairman of the American Security Council, claimed the United States is woefully behind

the Soviets in quantity and only a fraction ahead in quality.

DESPITE THE diverse opinions on the arms race, one theme struck home throughout the three day seminar. The prospect of a nuclear holocaust is a very real possibility. Although hundreds of millions of people would be killed, and although civilization as we know it would be set back decades, the idea that a nuclear war could be waged and won by one side is occupying the minds of both the U.S. and Soviet war strategists.

Should that day ever come, you can pack away the good CIA china. You can forget about claiming the necktie from the cleaners. The senator's garden won't need watering. And name droppers will be writing tearful anecdotes.